

Written Testimony of Kathy Null, AARP CT Volunteer
In **SUPPORT** of Raised Bill No. 989, AN ACT CONCERNING NURSING HOMES
Aging Committee and Human Services Committee, February 16, 2023

Dear Members of the Aging Committee and Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Kathy Null, and I am from Bridgewater, CT. I am providing written testimony as an AARP CT Volunteer as well as a former Resident Advocate (volunteer) under the Connecticut State Long Term Care Ombudsman office. I would like to express my support for Raised Bill No. 989, AN ACT CONCERNING NURSING HOMES.

As an AARP Volunteer for over 12 years, I've gotten to meet a lot of people in this state and heard about concerns about older family members and having to work with Nursing Homes, or Assisted Living, or even Home Health Care. As with any of us, I, too, have had personal experiences with Nursing Homes that affected me and my family. So when the opportunity came to become a Resident Advocate, I did so.

I was a Resident Advocate for 7 years. In that time, I really began to understand the difficulties faced by many residents in what I have called the "forgotten people". And, as I visited these facilities and got to know many of the residents, in a way they became "family" to me, too. Contrary to what may be assumed, most residents I visited had lived at the facility for more than a year, and many had no family nearby to visit or speak for them.

I had been assigned over the years to three (3) nursing homes in western Connecticut. The focus of the Ombudsman office is on resident rights, and as volunteers, we visit the home on a weekly basis, often more than once a week, to share observations with our Regional Ombudsman, along with monthly written reports. Our primary contact at the facility is usually the Director of Nursing. If we have concerns about an observation, we initially try to work it out with our contact there.

At the facilities I visited, most rooms are shared by two (2) residents. There are usually very few 'private rooms'. And every two rooms share one (1) bathroom between the rooms. I have experienced occasions where male residents were in one room and female residents in another or occasions where a door was locked and the residents in one room could not access the bathroom.

Nursing home residents also learn quickly not to complain – call it the "crowd mentality". They are afraid they may not get good help if they do. Unfortunately over the years as I got to know these residents and listen to their concerns, I become aware of situations where there were instances of verbal abuse and neglect. Changes in a resident's behavior, whether due to dementia or other issues, can become an issue if staff is not properly trained to understand these changes.

When we receive formal complaints about any issue, we have to respond and will work with our Regional Ombudsman to determine the best option to work with the facility. Yet, most often

while a resident may comment, they hesitate to make a formal complaint – the resident complaining does not want to be perceived as a ‘trouble maker’.

Therefore, as the current Raised Bill No. 989 is written, I believe this bill will continue the efforts the State of Connecticut is making to provide good care and protection to Nursing Home residents – increasing staffing levels, requiring written notification of care.

I have often spoken as an AARP volunteer of our human need to age with dignity. I urge the Aging Committee and Human Services Committee to work to pass this Raised Bill No. 989, AN ACT CONCERNING NURSING HOMES. This will allow these residents some dignity and protection in their lives. Thank you very much for your consideration in this important legislation.